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ABSTRACT

This paper presents the results of a study to examine the existence of sexual stereotyping of black males by white college students. Subjects were 180 male and 180 female white undergraduates; they were tested in sexually segregated groups. Each read one of three types of pornographic stories (hard-core, erotic realism, or sexual fantasy). The male partner was black in half of the stories. Subjects rated the story characters and were asked to do a figure drawing of a nude black male and a nude white male. Overall results suggest that black males are stereotyped as more potent and sexual than whites. (Author/PFS)

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THE SEXUAL STEREOTYPE OF THE BLACK MALE

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Abstract

One hundred-eighty male and 180 female white undergraduates read one of three types of pornographic stories (hard-core, erotic realism, or sexual fantasy). The male partner was black in one half the stories. Subjects rated the story characters and were asked to do a figure drawing of a nude black male and nude white male. There were some interactions with type of pornography; overall results suggest that black males are stereotyped as more potent and sexual than whites.

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THE SEXUAL STEREOTYPE OF THE BLACK MALE

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Several writers (Kovel, 1970; West, 1967) have offered theories of prejudice which are related to sexuality. It is a commonly held sex-myth that black males have large penises and are more sexually potent than whites (Fanon, 1967; McCary, 1967). This research studied the existence of sexual sterotyping of black males by white college students.

Subjects

One hundred eighty white males and 180 white females from general psychology classes at the University of Connecticut served as subjects.

Procedure

Subjects were tested in sexually segregated groups (n = 20). The tasks were given to them in three envelopes, and each task was completed before going to the next. The first contained the Mosher sex guilt scale (Mosher, 1968) and the F Scale (Lee and Warr, 1969). The second contained a sexually explicit story, either hard core pornographic, erotic realism, or sexual fantasy. The Kronhausen's (1959) note that erotic realism has more non-sexual detail, less exaggeration, and anti-erotic elements than hard core. Sexual fantasy is further removed from hard core because it is presumably private. The male character in each story was either white or black. Subjects rated the story characters on the three semantic differential factors (evaluation, activity, and potency), and on an unusual-usual scale. The third envelope contained a sexual arousal scale and blank paper. For the last task, subjects were asked to draw (counterbalanced) a nude black male and a nude white male. Subjects were informed at the beginning that they would read a sexually explicit short story, rate the characters, and take some personality scales. Race was no where mentioned except for five adjectives which differed between the stories. The figure drawing task was done last, since a racial comparison seems evident by its instructions.

Results

There were no sex differences so results were pooled. There were no significant differences on the evaluative factor ratings. Results on the activity scale were due to the type of story, with some race effect shown in white males being rated least active in erotic realism and sexual fantasy stories. Black males were rated as most potent in hard core and erotic realism stories. Black males in sexual fantasy were rated as potent as white males were in hard core stories. When the results for hard core and erotic realism are pooled, black males are rated as more potent ($t = 3.55$, df 230, $p < .001$) than whites. Table 1 presents the analyses of variance and Tukey contrasts for significant ratings of the male character.

On the figure drawing task, comparisons were made on the dimensions of penis size and total size of the figure. The judges agreed on all but two cases (99% agreement). For males 40% of the subjects drew the figures with equally-sized penises and bodies. For the remainder, three times as many drew the black male with a larger penis and/or larger body ($\chi^2 = 57.5$, df = 4, $p < .001$). Results for the females were similar ($\chi^2 = 42.6$, df = 4, $p < .001$). These results were consistent across story types.

There were no sexual arousal differences due to race of story character.

There were strong main effects attributable to sex guilt and authoritarianism (both high guilt and high authoritarianism were less aroused), but no interaction with race of story character.

Implications & Conclusions

Brigham (1971) does not mention sexual potency as a black sterotype that has been established through research. The results of this study, considered as a whole, seem to establish the existence of this sterotype in white college students. Of course, the strict comparisons from the stories are black males in interracial sex compared with white males in non-interracial sex. Of course, part of the fearful stereotype that whites use involves

black males seducing white females (Fanon, 1967) so that this combination is the most relevant comparison which can be made. Ideally, all racial-sexual combinations should be compared, since that should elucidate direction and intensity of these sterotypes. There is a tendency for the subjects in this study to attribute greater potency to black males regardless of the sexual context because black males in sexual fantasy stories were rated as potent as white males were in hard-core,"obscene" stories.

The figure drawing results were orthogonal to story type, and seem to underscore the other findings.

The overall thrust of this study is that black males are sterotyped as sexually potent by white college students, who are presumably more aware of such things than the general population. This sterotype could easily lead to discrimination since it is congruent with blacks being perceived as less civilized and more primative.

TABLE 1

Analyses of Variance on the
Semantic Differential Factors
for the Male Character

Dependent Variable	Treatment Groups	Mean	F	Significant Contrasts
Activity	HC-BW	23.89	6.66***	HC-BW > ER-WW*
	HC-WW	23.73		HC-BW > SF-WW**
	ER-BW	22.21		HC-WW > ER-WW*
	ER-WW	21.76		HC-WW > SF-WW**
	SF-BW	22.38		
	SF-WW	20.60		
Potency	HC-BW	28.93	5.27***	HC-BW > ER-WW**
	HC-WW	27.47		HC-BW > SF-WW**
	ER-BW	28.00		ER-BW > ER-WW*
	ER-WW	26.00		ER-BW > SF-WW*
	SF-BW	27.69		
	SF-WW	26.07		
Unusual	HC-BW	3.20	6.44***	HC-WW > ER-BW**
	HC-WW	3.71		HC-WW > ER-WW**
	ER-BW	2.67		HC-WW > SF-BW**
	ER-WW	2.75		HC-WW > SF-WW**
	SF-BW	2.67		HC-BW > SF-WW**
	SF-WW	2.28		

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$ d.f. = (5,354)

HC = Hard core WW = White-white

SF = Sexual fantasy BW = Black-white

ER = Erotic realism

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